

The Sustainability Living-Learning Community

The Sustainability Living-Learning Community will make sustainable urban living a core experience for First Year Experience (FYE) students living and learning at Portland State University. The Sustainability Living-Learning Community infuses practical and theoretical approaches to sustainable living, merging students' living community with unique academic and field experiences into the residential experience.

The program is designed to enhance students' academic and social experience, encourage community participation, promote financial sustainability, and encourage community support and campus-community partnerships. This community is part of the First Year Experience Program at Portland State University (see <http://www.pdx.edu/housing/first-year-experience> for additional information on the FYE program).

To participate in this community, students will live in the FYE program and enroll in a special section of the Freshman Inquiry course *Sustainability* taught by Jeff Fletcher. Students will partner with the Office of Sustainability and engage in various activities and programs outside of class to increase sustainable practices on campus and in the community. Students will be housed on the same floor, will participate in various community activities, and develop leadership skills through a variety of experiential-learning programs.

The specific goals of this sustainability living-learning community include:

- Year-long examination of the philosophy and principles of sustainability
- Exploration of best practices and resources for sustainability and sustainable living
- Extensive discussion about the interconnectedness and interdependence of the environmental, social, equity, and economic elements of sustainability
- Partnership with the Office of Sustainability
- Living cluster located in the silver LEED certified Broadway Building
- Participation in and creation of sustainable living outreach projects
- In depth community participation required as part of the course
- Strong commitment to applying what is learned in the classroom in the local community
- Bridging of in-class learning to residence hall living through additional themed programming
- Supportive learning environment, enhanced through peer academic support and Learning Community Assistants

About the Freshman Inquiry *Sustainability* Course

There is growing evidence that human activity is significantly transforming the natural systems that sustain us. Although we may often think of the natural world as something separate from our largely urban lives, our most basic needs such as nutritious food to eat, clean air to breathe, and clean water to drink depend on the health of the natural systems of which we are a part. The focus of this course will be on exploring the possibility of maintaining a sustainable relationship between human communities and the natural world. To investigate this question we will explore

the interconnectedness of global systems (including physical, ecological, cultural, social, and economic). We will begin in fall term with a focus on the sustainability of our food and water systems, and how they impact and depend on natural systems. In winter, we explore how different social and cultural systems, both past and present, interact with and influence their natural surroundings, including an in-depth exploration of current climate change issues. We conclude in spring by taking a critical look at how cultural, economic, and political traditions shape our relationship to the natural world, including how the human relationship to nature is understood, the ways economic well-being is measured, and how terms such as “sustainability” and “green” are used in the media, by interest groups, organizations, and constituents. Throughout the course students will be encouraged to read and research widely on these issues, report on their findings, participate actively in discussions, and develop a deeper sense of responsibility for their own habits and choices.

About the Freshman Inquiry Professor

Jeff Fletcher, PhD, is an assistant professor at Portland State University. He recently completed a National Science Foundation International Research Fellowship at the University of British Columbia. His research focuses on evolution theory, especially theories of how cooperation and altruism evolve. This includes field studies on “social” spiders in Central and South America. Jeff’s expertise also extends to how scientific modeling fits into the scientific method. He explores how models and general theories (such as game theory, evolution theory, and chaos theory) help us understand complex societal problems such as sustainability. He has a PhD in Systems Science, a Masters in Computer Science, and Bachelors in Biology. To relax, Jeff enjoys kayaking, yoga, biking, and learning more about life’s simple joys from his toddler son.

If you have additional questions, feel free to contact Christina Shafer (cshafer@pdx.edu), Christopher Carey (ccarey@pdx.edu), or Jeff Fletcher (jeff@pdx.edu). You may also contact the Office of Residence Life at 503-725-2450.